

Making Things Happen

Mali Development Group Annual Report 2009



Mali
Development Group
2000-2009

Gifford



A message from Mamadou Kone, Director of J&D

On behalf of all the staff at J&D and the communities we work with I want to express our gratitude, our recognition, and above all our satisfaction with a partnership which has united us over 10 successful years. Yes, 10 years, - and those years have been marked by support in developing the skills of J&D staff; the translation into practical action the plans of different communities, and of course the regular visits which have given us so much encouragement.

Market Gardens, diesel mills, the two barrage projects, support for medical projects and dispensaries, help for schools, and for young people through the Reproductive Health project- it is hard to remember the whole list of contributions! They have together had a considerable impact on the lives of women, children and men in more than 30 villages across Manankoro and Yanifolila, and in Bamako as well. These projects make me reflect on a partnership, which stands out for us in J&D as being forward looking, dynamic and open - as well as being one of the most steadfast.

So, dear members of MDG, in your tenth year, thank you all for your sacrifices, your hard work, your involvement, your journey with us, - they have contributed to what both organisations are today, and I dare to hope that our work together will go on evolving in quality and scale into the future. Words cannot completely express for me all that I feel personally about the partnership between MDG and J&D, and so to finish I say 'Vive MDG, Vive J&D et Vive le partenariat!' May God bless you.





Mali Development Group Annual Report 2008/9

A volunteer-led organisation

Welcome to this year's annual report. Our work first got under way in 2000, so 2009 is our tenth year of activity. From the beginning a central principle has been to operate as a charity run by volunteers, and relying entirely on the skills and commitment of members. So, the theme of this report is a celebration of the reasons why different people have become involved, and the range of activities and responsibilities they undertake for us, and for our partners. We hope that it conveys something of the energy, enjoyment and fulfilment we have all had from our relationship with Mali.

This has been a very difficult year for all charities, and we have been no exception. Money has been harder to find, and the value of funds sent to Mali has been seriously affected by an extremely adverse exchange rate. Because of the commitment and generosity of our members and the flexibility and understanding of Jeunesse et Développement, our central partners, we have managed to weather these difficulties and keep to our commitments. We have decided though to develop our capacity to bid more widely to Trusts and other corporate donors. Rob Spivey, one of our trustees, is developing a database and strategy, and other members with relevant skills and experience will support this work.

Our partners J&D

The central focus of MDG's work since we started has been our relationship with J&D. In 2000 Sue Upton started us thinking about a 'club des amis' to support a relatively new Malian N.G.O. Since then J&D has grown massively in size and reputation under the leadership of Mamadou Kone, its Director, and we are very proud to have been a part of this. In the past year

we have continued to fund the Bamako Reproductive Health project, and maintained our support for women's projects in Manankoro in the south of Mali. The past year has also seen completion of our first project in Yanifolila - a motor ambulance for the village of Thian.

As will be seen elsewhere in the report, early in 2009 we had the dreadful news of Joe Milthorpe's death following his work as a Gifford volunteer on the Soromba dam project. While nothing can compensate Joe's family, friends and colleagues for their loss, there is no doubt that the work done by Joe, and his colleague Liz Newall, at Soromba will have huge benefits for local villages. We are very pleased that Gifford wish to continue in partnership with us, and hope that their ongoing commitment will also serve as a form of commemoration.

Sometimes J&D and MDG are able to support and advise on other people's plans and ideas to help Mali. In recent months a team of young Doctors from St George's Hospital Tooting drove two 4x4 vehicles overland to Mali and then carried out medical work in collaboration with Malian colleagues. Congratulations to Sean Gardner and his friends, and we hope that the organisation they founded (M.A.L.I. Medical Aid Lasting Impact) will further develop into the future. Kone was able to advise on local needs, and during the visit. One of the vehicles will remain in Sikasso to support rural health centres in Manankoro. This, and the equipment which was delivered in the vehicle will help local health workers a great deal.

Our Link Worker within the MDG team, Tanty Samake, has continued to keep us informed of progress on projects with her reports and photographs. Tanty has recently been on maternity leave, and there have been two very happy events for J&D to celebrate - the arrival of two little girls - Djenebou, Tanty's new daughter, and Kone's daughter Wéloré.

During 2010 we will be working with J&D to develop our next three-year work plan for 2011 to 2013. As with the previous plans this will be a dialogue involving much consultation, and through our quarterly newsletters and web site www.malidg.org.uk we will involve our members fully in the development of the plan.

As we celebrate 10 years of this partnership it is very clear how much we owe to Sue Upton, who started us off, to Mamadou Kone who has been an inspiration

and friend throughout, and to Tanty and all her colleagues in the J&D team.

New partners

The year has seen the development of some other key partnerships, which bring in new perspectives, new supporters and new interests. While we have been involved for some time already with Kader Keita's work, Tim Hewes' willingness to take a lead on developing and focusing that support should mean a significant extension of Kader's work with disadvantaged children. The Malian Association of Culture and Hope (M.A.C.H) group, set up within MDG by Tim, is effectively a U.K branch of Kader's organisation, and you can see more details on www.kaderkeita.org

Recently an MDG member, Linda Francis, sought advice on how best to commemorate a close friend who was a committed environmentalist and lover of trees. With advice from J&D we were able to make links to the Malian agency Sahel Eco, who work in the Bankasse, Mopti and Segou areas of Mali on afforestation projects, which involve local communities. Linda has started a series of 'tree parties', which will help this work, again under the auspices of MDG. If you would like to know more about this work have a look at Linda's site, www.treeparties.org.uk

In the U.K

Our working partnership with the Malian Community Council developed steadily throughout the year. As well as the highly successful Conference, *Mali now, Mali the Vision* held in London in November we are jointly involved in a number of other activities, including work on Visa policy, and further conference events. We greatly value our relationship with the Community Council, whose knowledge and insight bring a new depth to our understanding of Mali, its people and its culture. If you would like to see the Conference Report from November 2008 visit www.malidg.org.uk

Andy Benson has continued to co-ordinate the Mali Interest Group - the e-network for information exchange between agencies involved in Mali. We would like to take this work further and are actively looking for someone to take this work on, so if you are interested, or know someone who might be, then please get in touch!

Friends of Mali, the U.K organisation promoting awareness of Malian culture asked to merge with

MDG during the past year, and we have taken existing FOM members into membership. As a result we would like to promote cultural events and activities, but this will depend on people with ideas and commitment coming forward to help make it happen. If you can assist with that please contact us!

One area of special interest will undoubtedly be music - an area which Andy Benson, our favourite bass guitarist, is particularly keen to concentrate on! We already have a long-standing relationship with the Truck Festival, where Malian musicians appeared for the first time this year. We have a link also to Alex Wilson, well known as a composer. Alex worked with Malian musicians at Aldeburgh last Summer and we would like to collaborate with him into the future. As Lucy Duran said in her talk to the November Conference, Malian Music is like a 'river of gold' for the country in terms of both revenue and prestige, and in some way this needs to be reflected in our work on raising awareness of Mali in the U.K.

Finally.....

We hope that you enjoy the report, and that you will want, in one way or another to support us. As you will see from the different contributions there are many ways of doing that!

John Hedge MDG Secretary
Linda King Chair of MDG





In Memory of Joe Milthorp

Early in 2009 Joe Milthorp one of the two volunteer Gifford engineers working on the Soromba dam became seriously ill. He was taken first to hospital in Bamako, and then flown to London, where he died in hospital on February 17th. In memory of Joe we are reproducing the message of condolence sent to Joe's family by the leaders of Soromba and its organisations.

We come together, heart-broken with sorrow, to present our most sad condolences, through J&D, to the family of a most approachable, kind, warm courageous and receptive young man. We wish to say that Joseph died in the course of work on a noble cause, to help achieve a project which has been the dream of everyone in our villages.

The young engineer, Joseph, helped realise this project with his two hands, his heart, his know-how, and his very helpful advice. He has given people in these villages something which has been their dream for a very long time- a plentiful supply of water, which will help them, and their animals, as well as helping the development of every family through their being able to grow vegetables and fish.

The image we have of Joseph's kindness will forever light up the village of Soromba. Our only request, through this letter, which Soromba would like to present to Joseph's family is that, because he has been regarded as a son of the village, the Soromba dam should be allowed to bear his name so that he is immortalised through the work he gave his life for.

Joe's family have said that they support this plan. The dam itself is now complete and making a real difference to people's lives, so Joe's memory will live on through this work.

Financial Report for the Year Ended 31st March 2009

Gross revenue of £48,820 was very similar to the previous year. Significant sums received included the following:

- Donations increased to £21,415 as a result of higher regular standing order payments, valuable individual and Trust contributions plus funds provided by Gifford (£5,150); the End to End bike ride, and sponsorship money from an entrant in the Plymouth/Bamako Rally. £1,000 was received from the Bernwode Trust and £500 from Just Trust.
- Sizeable contributions were received in connection with the Truck Festivals. These amounted to £13,000 and have assisted the Reproductive Health project. Additionally, Butts Brewery, who trade at Truckfest, donated £1,250.
- We continued with a range of fundraising events and activities. Gift Voucher sales were £270 and our Christmas Draw made £1,456.
- Fundraising by Tim Hewes generated £1,663 for Kader Keita's work with disadvantaged children in Mali.
- Gift Aid tax refunds increased compared with 2007/08 and amounted to £3,716.
- Some funding was given specifically to support the November Conference in London and our collaborative work with the Malian Community Council- £2,500 from the Malian Ambassador and funding from International Service and IIED.
- Member numbers increased as did subscription income - MDG now has over 200 members overall.

MDG has now raised in excess of £300,000 since inception.

Expenditure

Outgoings are based upon agreed priorities with partners, in particular J&D, and are subject to approval by the Executive Committee of MDG. In the case of our main partner funding is based on a 3-year Work Plan that currently covers the years 2008/11.

Payments are made to J&D on a quarterly basis normally to coincide with the Malian Calendar Financial year within which J&D operates. MDG receives regular reports from J&D on progress and priorities can be adjusted on the basis of feedback and new issues.

Outgoings amounted to £52,470 in the year 2008/09. Transfers to Mali were primarily directed towards J & D although funds were forwarded to Pensons à Demain, Kader Keita's organisation. The range of funded projects is described elsewhere in this report, and includes work in both Bamako and Manankoro.

Other costs amounted to only 6% of the income of MDG, although this proportion falls to 3% if the effect of Mali Conference revenue and outgoings are excluded. Modest overheads are in line with the charity's commitment to volunteer activity and they include only such items as secretarial expenses, public liability insurance and printing costs.

An annual deficit of £3,649 was realised for 2008/09 compared with a deficit of £8,436 in the prior year. However, as mentioned below, cash holdings remained satisfactory in terms of our agreed obligations.

The Current Financial Year

Since April 2009 income of approximately £21,000 has been received for the first five months of the present financial year, which is close to that achieved in 2008/09. This does include a substantial single donation for the work with disadvantaged children and this will enable Tim Hewes and Kader Keita to develop more detailed plans for the future of this project. As is noted in the report by the Secretary and Chair other fundraising has taken place in the adverse circumstances affecting all charities in the current financial climate, but our members have been very generous in responding to recent appeals

Taking account of existing economic realities, it has been necessary for the committee to be careful in planning outgoings relative to priorities itemised in the Work Plan and identified in discussion with J&D.

Outgoings since April 2009 have comprised transfers to Mali amounting to £9,920 plus usual overhead expenses. Following transactions since March 31st 2009, the charity's bank account balances amounted to approximately £19,000 as at 1st September, 2009.

David Hedge
Treasurer, Mali Development Group
September 2009





Ken and Linda King live in Stadhampton, Oxfordshire, were founder members of MDG and have been heavily involved ever since! Linda is now MDG Chair and Ken manages the MDG web site. Ken works in the space industry and Linda for the Probation Service as a Manager of Drug and Alcohol services.

When the Mali Development Group was first being set up I asked myself what I had to contribute; I knew something about astronomy – but the Malian astronomical community is not large; they don't have much of a space industry either; so I was left with using my computing knowledge! I volunteered to create a web site for the group and really enjoyed doing this as well as personally learning a lot on the way as our activities on the World Wide Web have been developed. We are now on our second version of the original site, www.malidg.org.uk, have a site for collecting sponsorship for fundraising efforts by our members, www.maligiving.com, and are developing a site for our activities in the Mali Interest Group. We now regularly get hundreds of hits per day on our main site.

I have been twice to Mali and seen the exceptional work that has been carried out there by our partners and it is this which convinces me that our Group's activities are making a difference. I hope that the web site(s) make a valuable contribution to this.

Not surprisingly, MDG has had lots of activities in Stadhampton and the neighbouring villages ranging from an annual cricket match on the village green to country walks and quiz nights. Lyn Collins, who lives in Watlington, hit on another new way of helping.

Finding myself with time on my hands earlier in the year I decided to consider alternative occupations to fill my usually busy days. Not wishing to take on anything too strenuous a little bit of decorating came to mind. Having driven my husband to the point of insanity with decorating our own home I thought that targeting someone else's could be a good idea.

After casually mentioning it to friends it became apparent that there were quite a few who hated decorating with the same passion that I love it (even the rubbing down!) and I very soon had a few offers to help fill my days. A big debate usually followed as to how much people would pay me but I really wanted something to do plus a bit of company. Knowing how much Linda and Ken King have done working with the Mali Development Group I hit on the idea that I would happily assist with their painting and decorating and they could make a small donation to the Charity's funds. It seemed a perfect solution. I spent two jolly days in Ken's company learning a bit more about the now very famous satellite (Ken works at Harwell in the space industry and his latest launch was earlier this year) while Linda supervised from her desk at work. Their sitting room at Vine Cottage received a "changing rooms" style of makeover. Result!

www.malidg.org

www.maligiving.com





Alanna and her instructor during the sky dive.

Alanna Radcliffe, aged 18, lives in London and she and her family are all MDG members

It was Linda and Ken King who told us about the Mali Development Group. They have been to Mali to see what life is like there, and what the people say they want .

- People don't have clean water.
- Kids don't have classrooms for studying.
- They don't have mosquito nets so the mosquitoes bite them and they get ill with Malaria.
- It is hard to get condoms so people have more children than they want.
- The roads are not good, in particular in the rainy season, so it is hard to get around.

The people in villages in Mali discuss what they want with J&D, and MDG in England works to raise the money to buy those things

- They helped with building two dams to save water.
- They sent out a Landcruiser to help workers get around .
- They helped to get a School built. They helped with Diesel Mills to grind grain and save women in villages hours of backbreaking work.
- They helped with Mosquito nets.
- They helped provide condoms and advice to young people.

With Linda & Ken we have been to lots of events organised by MDG to raise money – walks, bike rides, a quiz, and a weekend in Devon camping in a Teepee. We have helped at book sales in Oxford and also collected money in a street collection.

The only thing I did myself was skydive from 12000 feet. I was very afraid but because I had to do it to raise the money for Mali, I did do it. We got about £500.

All these things we do with MDG are fun but the money raised helps other people make their life better.



Rob and Hilary Spivey live in Sudbury, Suffolk

We have been involved with MDG for about 18 months but how did we decide that we would support MDG? The ambitions of many charities are good and the work valuable. In the end we felt you have to meet the people involved and judge what you can do.



Meeting the people in the UK reveals a lot of practical knowledge and commitment. Going to Mali to meet the director of Jeunesse et Développement (Mamadou Kone), his staff and the people in the villages for whom all this is done is very reassuring. If you don't have the chance to go, be assured that the operation there is run very efficiently and the people who receive the benefits are very appreciative.

It's been a surprise to me just how the ordinary things in one's life can present opportunities to raise money. For example, one of my wife's business clients was closing their small business office – we asked for any spare computers and so we were able to send 3 laptops to Mali and generate £1,000. More everyday things were spending a few hours stewarding at Truck and collecting Meals for Mali money from friends and relatives. It all counts and really can be that simple!



Averil and Martin Freeth outside their home in France.

A regular activity for most charities is the annual draw or raffle, and MDG has a draw each Christmas, with all prizes donated by members and supporters. As an example, Averil and Martin, who live in West London, donate a holiday in their French home every year- it's the prize most people want to win!

When our friend Andy Benson first asked whether we'd consider donating a raffle prize of a week in our French home to MDG, we knew relatively little about its work. But now we've come to see it as the best kind of development

agency, providing exactly the technical and organisational advice, sensitive support and funding for well-defined and planned local projects wanted by local people in different Malian communities. The work is co-operative and organic, and enhances and builds on the considerable knowledge which already lies within the communities, enabling people locally to achieve what they want and need.

We feel really privileged to support this work, even peripherally – and we have the added satisfaction of seeing raffle winners enjoy the benefit of our fantastic house in South West France!



The draw is made at the annual MDG Christmas Party, and Lou Everatt from Oxford was the lucky winner last year - reports from the cricket suggest that she is better at baking than she makes out!

As I sit here baking cakes like a dervish for the MDG Cricket Match, it is very easy to cast my mind back to the fabulous holiday my friends and I enjoyed at La Bastide d'Armagnac this year as the lucky winners of the MDG Draw. The cottage was amazing. We cycled about the area which was beautiful. We bought local produce which was of such high quality, it made this bumbling cook shine!

I'm really pleased to be able to be involved with MDG, because of the work that it does in Mali, which is in the best spirit of development work overseas.

Using their talents to help MDG

Fran lives in New Cross, in south London

My way of supporting a great charity that helps some of the poorest people is through writing short articles for a small magazine called *Aspire*. Published by the David St John Thomas charitable trust it encourages writers and funds small charities, particularly those working in Africa. Perfect, I thought and sent off 300 words in 2005, which brought in £250. Another short piece is in the pipeline. Watch this space.

Janet Longstaff lives in Leebotwood, Shropshire and has many skills and interests, including advanced sailing qualifications.

I visited Mali for the music, and got emotionally involved!

I support MDG because it is run by volunteers, and one knows the money goes directly to the villages and organisations in Mali. I give talks on various subjects and any payment I get for these goes to MDG.

I gave a 'Meal for Mali' which was very enjoyable - just like a party except people were relieved of £10 each at some point - after they'd had a bit to drink!

I've plans to organise a 'charity film night' later this year, and I still religiously save my 5p pieces!

Heather Bolitho lives in Coggeshall, Essex

I was a founder member and supported some of the early events, but I really wanted to get much more involved after I visited the country and visited J&D and some of their projects. As soon as we arrived at Bamako airport I was overwhelmed by the vibrant colours and the energy and friendliness of the people, however chaotic things seemed. Travelling into the city with Mamadou Kone and Tanty Samake from J&D, though, I immediately began to see the signs of real poverty, and I saw and learnt much more about this in the days



Fran Hedges



Janet Longstaff

that followed. You read about these things and watch TV programmes, but when you see for yourself and make your own contact with people it becomes mind blowing. I was so impressed with J&D and the work which Kader Keita was doing with street children. The great thing was to be able to visit not as a protected tourist in a group, but as the guest of an agency which was working on the ground.

I am a textile artist and made greeting cards for MDG to sell. More recently I ran a 'posh junk' stall in the market at Coggeshall with my niece Gill. This was very popular. We sold donated items of all kinds, but tried to keep the quality good enough so that we could charge reasonable amounts! There are going to be more stalls and hopefully lots more money for MDG.



Heather Bolitho





Sue Raikes lives in Eynsham Oxfordshire and has been involved in MDG from a very early stage. As well as fundraising Sue leads MDG's work on Fair Trade.

Fundraising should be fun – and works best when it builds on things you are good at, and like doing anyway. (Please remind me of this when I am going on about the world price of cotton or indeed touting raffle tickets!)

Music, food and pots seem to do it for me. Over the years, Adrian and I have organised several gigs in our house and in pubs in Eynsham, but we do worry sometimes about overloading our friends!

The women's singing workshop I arranged with Patsy Townsend was a real hit - combining great music and £10 for the lunch. I like cooking and am happy to scale up for parties so the MDG catering section is now in business – and with huge help from Adrian and another MDG member Siri Moorby we did a sit down silver wedding lunch for 60 (£200 for MDG). If you have friends planning such events do think of us.

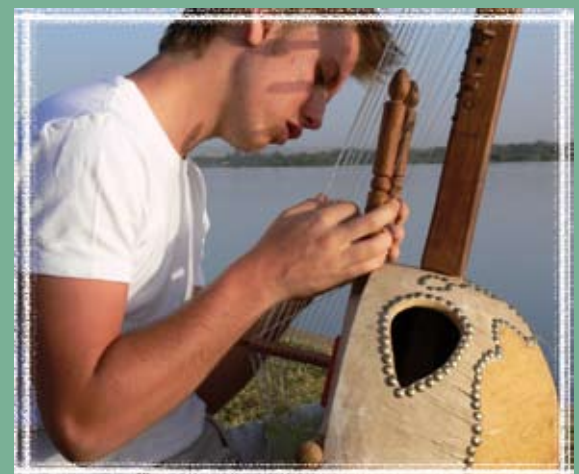
But not all ventures are successful – and if any tall, slim women would like some lime green and purple trousers tailored in Bamako do let me know – I have plenty!

◀ part of Mark's photographic exhibition

Mark Ereira-Guyer lives in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk.

Last year my 17 year old son Theo and I accompanied other volunteers from MDG to see the work they were doing with children, young people and families across that beautiful, landlocked, West African country. Wherever we went we were welcomed by countless smiles and great good cheer. In vibrant bustling villages we saw social and education projects in action led by dynamic young Africans with a vitality befitting their country's sense of purpose. The support of the Mali Development Group to their work was of paramount importance.

When I was back in the UK I decided to undertake two fundraising events – at a local Art Gallery and restaurant – sponsored by my third sector consultancy business. These events raised funds and led to some important corporate links, and further donations, such as with the local Rotary and with musician, Alex Wilson. Furthermore in my elected role as a Suffolk County Councillor I have exhibited a collection of the photographs I took whilst in Mali at a Primary School – and helped to lead a discussion with schoolchildren to profile the charity and the need for its social development work in Mali.



Theo practicing the kora in Mali with the River Niger in the background, at Segou.



MDG and Music

MDG has had many links with music over the years-many of our members first got involved because they had been to Mali for the music and fell in love with the country. Sometimes performers have given their time for benefit gigs - and that includes Malian musicians Bassakou Kouyate and Amy Sacko who very generously played for us at our London Conference last November. This autumn we have another musical boost as the Kennington and District United Choirs, conducted by Trevor Cowlett will perform Handel's Messiah on 11th of October at 3pm in St Swithuns Church, Kennington. On this page are two examples of MDG and Music during the past year.

Redhouse Radio and the Ouse Brothers

We were pleased this year to have the support of Cambridge-based bands, the Ouse Brothers and Redhouse Radio, who played two benefit gigs for us, at the Eynsham Star near Oxford and the Quay Theatre in Sudbury. Lively evenings both and audience feedback fantastic. Redhouse Radio's Richard Wildman said, "Seems like a win-win to us - we get to play, which is what we like to do, hopefully the punters have a good time, and we raise some dosh to ship over to Mali, where we know it goes a lot further than it does here. We're more than pleased to help and more power to your elbows MDG!" Our thanks to both bands, who really put themselves out to make these gigs a success. If you want to hear a taster of what we enjoyed, you can hear Redhouse Radio on My Space here - <http://www.myspace.com/redhouse6>.

Redhouse Radio and the Ouse Brothers live at the Quay

Truck

Over the last 6 years the Truck music festival has helped MDG with an annual donation, and this has been a major source of funding for the Reproductive Health project in Bamako. The Truck organisation now runs two festivals - the Wood festival, at a venue near Wallingford in Oxfordshire, which is run entirely on ecological principles, and the main Truck festival at Steventon, now attracting 6,000 people each Summer.

Each year MDG provides teams of stewards to support Truck in appreciation of the help given, and a number of MDG members volunteer for this work. This is yet another way in which members contribute to MDG's work.



Left to right, Truck Stewards Mark, Bernard, Sally and Luke



Vieux Farka Toure, Truck Stage



Practical Partners

MDG has had links with the Malian Community Council for a number of years, but the relationship has become much closer over the past year. As well as the highly successful Conference held in London last November we have also begun to work together on a range of other issues - from Visas to Fair Trade. The Community Council plays an important part in representing the Malian community in the UK and MDG is proud to have developed such strong links. The Council's President Wilfred Willey is the guest speaker at this year's MDG Annual meeting and we look forward to a developing collaboration in 2010 and onwards.



Aoua Konate is one of the members of the Community Council. She organised the Malian food, which was a highlight of the November Conference

I am grateful and happy for the positive action MDG is taking to promote our country in co-operation with the Community Council.

The conference in November 2008 has given me evidence that MDG is working hard to help those who are in need in Mali. I understood that in the UK there are people who are spending enormous time, energy and effort to help Mali. This gives us (the Malian Community in the UK) the courage to stand up and help however we can.

So it was a great pleasure for us (Mme Kone Ada, Mme Toure Massire and myself) to assist with the catering for the last conference.

Any little help makes a big difference for a country like Mali.

So may God help us to continue with success!



Detail from a painting done in collaboration between Tim Oelman and Kader Keita





Liz Newell lives in Manchester, and works in the Manchester Office of Gifford. She went to Mali at the beginning of 2009 to work on the Soromba project.

Having grown up in Great Britain I have been fortunate enough to have the opportunity to be able to go to University and extend my knowledge.

I now work as a Structural Engineer and having worked for 4 years I find that it is so easy to sit in your own bubble, designing to guidelines set by the British Standards Institute, not really being challenged to think about why.

I wanted to go to Mali to see what life is like without the opportunities of higher education and regular work, how they go about building up their society without the readily available guidance that we have. I wanted to challenge my pre-conceptions of what would work, and feel the difficulties of not being able to go for the easy solution due to financial constraints and difficulties in getting hold of the preferred materials. I wanted to experience what it takes having a non-skilled workforce who have never worked on a construction project before and managing the quality of the work to ensure the structure will last through the rainy season.

What I found was very humbling, the people's emphasis on what is important is very different and everyone is so willing to help and give whatever they could even though they had so little.

They welcomed me in and gave me their food and hospitality and wanted to hear my opinions on the construction. They have a great thirst for knowledge in whatever form in the hope that it will help them to develop so that one day they won't have to worry about the things we take for granted. It seems in a world that is so restrictive without money that every little bit of help counts and by following their example, everyone has some skill they can pass on for free by working together.



Aziz Halime and his wife grew up as Palestinian refugees. They live in Oxford and the whole family have been members of MDG from an early stage. As well as his support for MDG Aziz is very involved in volunteer work with a range of Islamic organisations. His paid employment is in the employment and training of offenders. This is what Aziz says about belonging to MDG.

What would organising a banquet of food; cycling across the countryside along narrow uphill roads and enjoying a nice picnic afterwards, or playing (I only watch) a cricket game, mean to those who are struggling to find a little amount of drinking water deep in the rough terrain of Mali, or working hard to secure 'walls' to their kids' school?

I -born in a tent as a refugee - never thought I would be supporting any cause other than mine! I never thought that support could take the shape of a long camping weekend in the lovely fields of Devon with delectable lamb kebabs for dinner, or selling (actually buying) books in a book sale event in the splendour of the hall of an ancient church, with tea, coffee and a variety of homemade cakes served.

Now I know how individuals can make a difference. By knowing those individuals, some of whom travelled thousands of miles and crossed so many borders, witnessing a coup, to get a 4x4 to Mali and meet the people they work hard to support, I know what ultimate charity means!



Tim Hewes is Assisting Priest at St Helen's Church Abingdon, in Oxfordshire, and his main role within MDG is as coordinator of The Malian Association of Culture and Hope - see www.kaderkeita.org

His church duties centre on the pastoral care of parishioners and it is the love of this pastoral work that flows from his Christian faith, which led Tim to become involved in MDG and go to Mali last January.

His role is to liaise with Kader Keita in Mali, coordinating support in the UK, fund raising, budgeting and planning how this vital work may develop. Tim and his wife Andrea are also regular stewards at 'Truck-fest' - the Oxfordshire Festival, which has generously supported MDG for the past 6 years.

Recently Tim undertook a 7-day sponsored fast for MDG, intending to raise awareness of the desperate needs of the hungry children, with which Kader Keita works. By the third day of drinking just water, he wondered how he was going to be able to work, including taking a funeral and burial. Would he fall in the hole?! He didn't, but could do very little over the final few days, unable to concentrate, or sleep. He lost 14 pounds and got 'a whacking insight into the exhaustion and desperation that hunger brings'.



Shauni and the cricket match

My name is Shauni McGregor and I am fourteen years old, and live in Oxfordshire. I have recently been taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. I had heard about the Mali Development Group before and knew several people involved with the charity so I thought this was the perfect chance to do the community service part of my bronze award.

To help MDG I was assigned the task of helping to organise a cricket match, which the MDG team was playing in. They have a game each year against Stadhampton Cricket Club to raise money. My work included baking cakes to sell, helping to set up the tents (in strong winds) and taking various pieces of garden furniture back to where they belonged after the match. I also had to design flyers and post them whilst being attacked by various dogs on the way!

The match was a great success with lots of cakes sold and this year the team managed to tie with Stadhampton!

MDG Committee members 2008/9

Chair - Linda King

Secretary - John Hedge

Treasurer - David Hedge

Andy Benson

Ray Fishbourne

Janice Hedge

Andrea Hewes

Ken King

Rob Spivey

Co-opted member Tim Hewes



Charity Registration Number 1088140

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Adrian Moyes

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Designed by Andrea Hewes